

Maleberry *Lyonia ligustrina*



Shrubs 2 to 3 m tall, usually in clumps from underground rhizomes. Leaves alternate, deciduous, pubescent on both sides, obovate to elliptic, 3 to 7 cm long, 1 to 3.5 cm wide, finely serrate to entire. Flowers white, globular, 3 to 5 mm long, borne in clusters at ends of branches. Fruit a dry, globose, pubescent capsule, 2.5 to 3 mm long. Seeds very narrow, 1.5 to 2 mm long. Found throughout the southern states east of the Mississippi River; in dry woods or thickets to moist or wet habitats.

Toxicity

The resinoid andromedotoxin and the glucoside arbutin are the toxic principles responsible for symptoms. Sheep, goats, and cattle are susceptible to poisoning if they consume the plant, especially the leaves. There are recorded cases of toxicity in humans and monkeys.

Most clinical cases of toxicity are seen in the winter and early spring months. When other forage is not available, livestock may consume the toxic plants.

Symptoms

Signs of toxicity occur usually within 6 hours after the plants are eaten. Symptoms include incoordination, excessive salivation, vomiting, bloat, weakness, muscular spasms, coma, and death. The animals are often found down, unable to stand, with their heads weaving from side to side.

Treatment

In severe cases, do not drench animals or give medicine by mouth since they may be unable to swallow due to weakness of the throat muscles. Administer mineral oil or saline laxatives by stomach tube. Use intravenous electrolyte solutions.